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1972/04/12

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By CN NARA Date 9/12/02

Alex: I've left action copy with Holdridge. John

SECRET
EYES ONLY

URGENT ACTION

April 12, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. KISSINGER

FROM: JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE

SUBJECT: French Meddling in Indochina Situation

If a report from the GVN delegation is to be believed (Tab A), the French are engaged in even more unconscionable meddling in Indochinese affairs than we had heretofore suspected:

-- According to the deputy chief of the GVN delegation Froment-Meurice has been taking soundings among Vietnamese exiles and recently approached Tran Van Huu, former prime minister under Bao Dai, with a request for Huu's judgment as to which of the following men would be the best candidate for the head of a coalition government in Saigon--Big Minh, Ho Thong Minh, (ex-defense minister under Diem) or Au Truong Thanh.

-- All of these above mentioned Vietnamese figures are of notorious unreliability and/or incompetence. Au Truong Thanh, even though he was Prime Minister Ky's finance minister, was subsequently run out of the government because of virtually irrefutable evidence of contacts with Communist proselytizing groups. Thanh himself is probably in fact a Communist.

-- In any event the name of the game that the French are playing is all too familiar to you and simply plays into DRV designs to emasculate the organized anti-Communist forces in Vietnam.

The report has a strong ring of truth to it given known French attitudes and the particularly dovish views of Foreign Minister Schumann who has not been helpful at all to us in Indochina. (You may recall an earlier intelligence that he had urged the Lao Ambassador Paris that the Laotian government request a U.S. bombing halt throughout Laos.) We don't know what steps you might consider taking with respect to these emerging French attitudes. However, Bujon of the French Embassy has called for an appointment to see John Negroponte today or tomorrow and John could without revealing any sources or information, take a very firm line both with respect to our position concerning the current situation and with respect to any hairbrain ideas the French may have as to a political solution in South Vietnam.

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Recommendation:

That you authorize John to see Bujon tomorrow and talk to him in the strong terms outlined above.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____